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General Assembly

Official Records

First Committee

18th Meeting

Thursday, 10 November 1994, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Valencia Rodriguez . . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Agenda item 73 *(continued)*

Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee (A/49/579)

The Chairman *(interpretation from Spanish)*: This afternoon delegations will continue to exchange views on the agenda item. This morning we had an interesting debate on the rationalization of the work and the reform of the agenda of this Committee, and there was some discussion of the preliminary draft resolution that had been introduced informally to the Committee.

This afternoon we will continue with statements on general matters to do with these questions. Then we will perhaps hold over any specific discussion of amendments to this draft until the informal discussion among directly interested delegations, to be held in Conference Room 8.

Mr. Fasehun (Nigeria): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss once again this afternoon the rationalization of our work in the First Committee.

The rationalization is, of course, an ongoing process. I wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Chairman, for his efforts in the rationalization and streamlining of the work of this very important Committee.

For almost three years in a row, we have been involved in discussing the question of rationalization. The fruits of that discussion are contained in the paper that was presented to the reconvened session of the First Committee last September. Some elements of that paper have now been turned into the preliminary draft resolution which you, Mr. Chairman, and the representatives of three other countries — the members of the Bureau — are proposing.

We have taken time to study the paper, and we wish to thank you once again for it. We have certain concerns, in that this is the first year that we have experimented with a new format for debate and discussion and I think we need more time to digest fully the reform that is in place. We believe that there cannot yet be a definitive pronouncement as to the effectiveness or otherwise of the reforms that have been made in the last two or three years.

This year we are still trying to adjust to the reforms already made. If, therefore, we do not utilize all the time available to us, I do not think we can conclude thereby that reform has been a failure. It seems to us that we need two or three more years before we can pronounce definitively on how the reforms we have undertaken have gone.

I should also like to point out that part of the problem that we have is that, in reform, everything cannot really be put on paper, nor should we really be forced into a straitjacket. We have noted the time allotted for debate, and we have also noted that under the preliminary draft resolution proposed by the Chairman there is a suggestion for the consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items.

I fear that we do not understand what that particular suggestion means. Are we going to start again with an open-ended drafting session? Or is it going to turn into another session of the Disarmament Commission? There are

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already various draft resolutions that have been submitted to the First Committee for general debate and general comments. We fear that if this were the case for all the aforementioned draft resolutions too, it would create difficulties: rather than lead to a meeting of minds, it might even complicate matters and lead to the further proliferation of draft resolutions, as well as causing more division within the Committee itself.

We are of the opinion that countries that are interested in submitting or that are submitting draft resolutions could contact interested parties and circulate their draft resolutions. We do have a traditional practice of contacting each other in-house to discuss draft resolutions where there may be difficulties. We therefore wish to have clarification regarding the Chairman's suggestion on the consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items.

Finally, we wish to see enumerated by cluster all the items that we have agreed upon. Many may think that this is redundant, but since these will be the resolutions that formally present the outcome of our discussions in this session of the Committee, it would not be asking too much if the items that we have identified and that have been arranged in clusters were also to be recapped in this preliminary draft resolution.

Mr. Rhee (Republic of Korea): I should like to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this meeting to discuss the rationalization of the work of the First Committee.

I should like to limit my remarks to the general aspects of the rationalization and to come back at a later stage to the specific wording of the draft resolution.

Resolution 48/87 laid a solid foundation for us to consider disarmament and international security issues in a more systematic manner. During this session, we have tested the Committee's new approach, and it is my delegation's assessment that our first attempt was successful, though there are some areas that need to be further improved and developed in the future.

My delegation believes that discussions on the thematic approach should be not only further encouraged, but very carefully and prudently organized if we really want to see tangible results from that approach. In this regard, my delegation believes that practical measures should be introduced to facilitate the participation of the various delegations in this room.

My delegation's points are rather simple. First, as many previous speakers have already pointed out and as you, Mr. Chairman, have already indicated, but would not pursue because of the lack of meeting facilities, the setting for our discussion should be more informal. My delegation believes that we have to find out, in coming sessions, how to ensure that the meeting environment is more workable.

Secondly, my delegation believes that it would be much better if we could make the atmosphere of our discussion more lively and thought-provoking. In this regard, I should like to suggest the introduction of a seminar-style discussion into our thematic approach. We could invite, on a voluntary basis, several experts from the various delegations with different views regarding specific agenda items, and on hearing the expert views, delegations would obtain some fresh ideas on the issues concerned. Such an approach could also stimulate participation in our discussions by various delegations.

We are at a very early stage in our rationalization process, and my delegation fully agrees that the process is an ongoing one. There is an oriental proverb that says "Once begun means half done", and I believe the First Committee has launched the process quite successfully and that we can accomplish the task in the near future.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): If no other delegation would like to speak on this item in the Committee, then I shall take it that delegations wish to proceed to the informal meeting on the equally informal draft that has been distributed on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.